



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 5, 2010

Contact: Rachel Wall
(916) 384-9026 | rwall@hsr.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY RESPONDS TO COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR BAY AREA SECTION

SAN FRANCISCO – Based on feedback from more than 30 community meetings in just the past four months, the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board agreed to focus its analysis of the San Francisco-to-San Jose section on alternatives that substantially narrow the right-of-way property needed to build the project.

The Supplemental Alternatives Analysis adopted by the Authority’s Board of Directors calls for more detailed study of three approaches to creating a four-track system along the Caltrain corridor through the Peninsula to be shared by the two rail systems, each using designs that shrink the width of the project from 120 feet to as little as 80 feet.

“Our challenge is to build a statewide high-speed train system that works in concert with local commuter rail systems and respects the communities through which it passes – with this action we are moving toward that solution,” said Authority Chairman Curt Pringle. “This report shows we are not just listening to community concerns, we are taking them to heart – and building them into our design for the project.”

The three alternatives to be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Report call for using a combination of at-grade, aerial, trench, and – to a lesser degree – tunnels along different parts of the route. The Draft EIR is expected to be circulated to the public in December.

No final decision on alignment alternatives will be made until the Authority and the Federal Railway Administration complete and approve the final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for each section of the project.

The 800-mile high-speed train project is the largest public infrastructure project in the nation, and is expected to create as many as 100,000 construction-related jobs each year while the project is being built.

Narrowing the width of the project poses design and construction challenges, but would also sharply reduce the amount of property needed to build the project, and lessen the construction impacts, the analysis found. In Burlingame alone, for example, narrowing the project would save 3.3 acres in total right of way – about the size of 2 ½ football fields, including the end zones.

The refinements included in the analysis also help the project achieve other goals identified as community priorities during the intensive outreach effort, including:

- Improving current rail services and seamlessly linking them to the new high-speed train project.
- Protecting natural resources and open space, avoiding impacts to creeks and preventing tree and habitat loss;
- Improving connections between communities with grade separations for cars, bicyclists and pedestrians.

The supplemental alternatives analysis also calls for continued study of station locations in San Francisco (a joint terminal station at Transbay Transit Center and 4th and King), Millbrae and San Jose, with a potential Mid-Peninsula station located at either Redwood City, Palo Alto or Mountain View.

Additionally, the analysis calls for continued study of a maintenance facility at the Brisbane/Bayshore site, which provides space for maintenance and storage of the trains and good access from the Caltrain main tracks.

Merced to Fresno

The Authority also approved a Supplemental Alternatives Analysis for the Merced to Fresno section of the project that reduces the number of potential locations for a heavy maintenance facility from eight to five.

The five potential maintenance facility locations to be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report are: Castle Commerce Center, Kojima, Harris-deJager, Gordon Shaw and Fagundes.

The analysis removed from further study included the Harris-Kwan and Harris Farm sites, which are not located along track alignments being considered for the project. The Mission Avenue site was also removed from further study based on difficulties providing access to the site from the north.

In addition, the analysis calls for further examination of new design options near the communities of Le Grand and Chowchilla. It also calls for study of two alternatives for connecting the Central Valley portion of the project with Gilroy and San Jose, including a larger triangle “Y” (wye) along Avenue 24 and an Avenue 21 “Y” The analysis recommended against further study of a “Y” along Avenue 22.

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